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Orange Pulp: Stories of Mayhem Murder and Mystery

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After World War I the dime novel was quickly usurped by mass fiction magazines that were typically printed on cheap, rough paper—called pulps. Pulp, over time, became synonymous with genre crime fiction of the tough, dark, hard-boiled, noir variety. Orange Pulp is a collection of some of the pulps' better practitioners, either those who worked directly in the field, or who were heavily influenced by them. Further pulling them together are the stories' locale—Florida; in many cases the writers also lived, at least for a time, in Florida.

This collection includes novel excerpts, short stories, and a complete novel whose original publication dates range from 1929 to 1975. There is an excerpt from John D. MacDonald's A Flash of Green and two complete (and addictive) chapters from Brett Halliday's Dividend on Death featuring South Beach P.I. Michael Shayne. Jonathan Wyatt Latimer's The Dead Don't Care (Chapter 3) published in 1937 is a precursor to the witty, racing repartee of P.G. Wodehouse and Lawrence Block's Bernie the Burglar series. For the real collector there is a previously unpublished novel excerpt by Charles Willeford, The First Five in Line, which vaguely resembles Stephen King's The Running Man, and should give the producers of TV's "Survivor" and "Big Brother" an idea or two for a new show. The final work is a complete novel, The Hated One by Don Tracy, in which the alcoholic narrator returns to his hometown to find himself caught up in a racially charged murder trial reminiscent of To Kill a Mockingbird. This story—like all in the collection—is a gem.

What all the stories have in common—besides Florida and the pulp noir tradition—are sparkling writing, distinctive voices and compulsive readability.

MARK TERRY (October 16, 2000)

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